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REVIEWS

A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1400. By JOHN EDWIN WELLS, M. L., M. A., Ph. D. Published under the auspices of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1916. Pp. xv + 941.

Every serious student of the Middle English literature will find this *Manual* an indispensable work of reference, for the reason that it assembles information not hitherto contained in any single bibliography or handbook. The aim of the book may best be indicated by quoting the author's own statement in the Preface:

This manual makes the first attempt to treat all the extant writings in print, from single lines to the most extensive pieces, composed in English between 1050 and 1400. At times, as with the Romances, the Legends, and the Drama, a desire for greater completeness has led to the inclusion of pieces later than 1400.

In point of fact, the chronological limits here set up are somewhat misleading. No reason appears for taking as the starting point such an early date as 1050, unless possibly it be a desire to include the four-line song of King Canute (p. 490), and even this has come down to us in a text of the second half of the twelfth century. Such texts as the continuations of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (p. 190) and *Peri Didaxeon* (p. 428) and the Charters and Wills in Thorpe's *Diplomatarium Angl. Ævi Saxonici* (p. 441) seem out of place in a "Manual of Writings in Middle English" and might better have been left to the bibliographer of Old English. If, on the other hand, it was the intention to include *all* English texts written subsequent to 1050 one would expect to find reference to such texts as the Old English Vision of Leofric (ed. A. S. Napier, Philol. Soc. Trans., 1908).

Nor does the year 1400 fairly represent the lower chronological limit of the *Manual*, even when one notes the exceptions stated by the author. For not only in the case of Romances, Legends and Drama, but in the field of lyrical and didactic poetry as well, he extends his limits to include a large body of fifteenth-century material. Such collections of songs and carols, for example, as those in Sloane ms. 2593 and Bodl. ms. Eng. poet. e. 1 belong

wholly to the fifteenth century. Again, numerous poems by Lydgate and Hoccleve have been registered though many others (which so far as one can judge have an equal claim to inclusion) have been omitted.

To draw a dividing line through Middle English literature at the year 1400, every one will agree, is difficult if not impossible. But the proportion of the fifteenth-century material in this *Manual* is surprisingly large in view of the limits which the author announces. To be sure, the student will not complain because he receives generous measure, but he may be perplexed to understand the principle of selection; and when he seeks information concerning a particular fifteenth-century text he cannot be sure whether he will find it or not.

The material is arranged topically rather than chronologically. Some idea of the comprehensiveness of the *Manual* may be gained from the list of chapters into which it is divided: 1. Romances, 2. Tales, 3. Chronicles, 4. Works Dealing with Contemporary Conditions, 5. Homilies and Legends, 6. Works of Religious Information and Instruction, and Aids to Church Services, 7. Proverbs and Precepts, and Monitory Pieces, 8. Translations and Paraphrases of the Bible, and Commentaries, 9. Dialogues, Debates, Catechisms, 10. Science, Information, Documents, 11. Rolle and his Followers, 12. Wycliffe and his Followers, 13. Pieces Lyrical in Impulse or in Form, 14. Dramatic Pieces, 15. The *Pearl* Poet; Gower, 16. Chaucer. The value of the *Manual* is further increased by the addition of 130 pages of Bibliographical Notes, and an Alphabetical Index covering 57 pages.

Of these sixteen chapters the last is the one which could most easily have been spared, since it was manifestly impossible for the author in a single chapter (even though it runs to 149 pages) to treat the Chaucer literature as thoroughly as Miss Hammond has done in her *Manual*. Nevertheless, many important Chaucer studies have appeared since 1908, so that Professor Wells's chapter serves a useful purpose in supplementing Miss Hammond's bibliography.

The chapter on Romances, on the other hand, is far more complete and thorough than Miss Billings's *Guide to the Mid. Eng. Metrical Romances*, which has long been out of date. Some few omissions—comparatively unimportant—may be noted: *Amoryus and Cleopes* (see *Pol. Rel. L. Poems*, pp. 301-8); *Apollonius of*

Tyre, fragmentary metrical version (printed by Halliwell, *New Boke about Shakespeare* and reprinted by A. H. Smyth, *Shak's Pericles and Ap. of Tyre*, 1898); *Bevis of Hamtoun*—Matzke's paper, "The Oldest Form of the B. Leg." mentioned as "promised in M. Phil." (p. 766), appeared July 1912 (*Mod. Phil.* x. 19 ff); *Guy of Warwick* (no reference to F. N. Robinson, "Irish Lives of Guy of W. and Bevis of Hamton," *Zt. f. Celt. Philol.* vi); *Childe of Bristowe* (no mention of the version entitled 'The Merchant and His Son,' Halliwell, *Nugae Poeticae*, and Hazlitt, *Remains* i, 132 ff.); *Sir Eglamour* (no mention of Chepman and Myllar's print or the reprint by Laing in 1827); *Sir Fierabras* (no reference to the Irish version, ed. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* xix—another Irish ms. of this romance, not noted by Stokes, is preserved in ms. Egerton 174, fols. 62-137 and 140); *Florian and Florete*, ed. Roxburghe Club 1873; *Peare of Provence and the Fair Maguelone* (see *Pol. Rel. L. Poems*, pp. 293-300). In the discussion of the Breton Lais in English (p. 124) a reference should be added to the important paper by L. Foulet (*Zt. f. rom. Philol.* xxx, 698-711.)

Although undertaking to treat only Middle English material which has already appeared in print, Professor Wells adds in the case of each piece a list of the manuscripts known to him. These lists of manuscripts, however, are the least satisfactory feature of the *Manual*, for the reason that they are compiled from secondary sources. Even a collation of the printed Catalogues of mss. would have added materially to these manuscript lists, and would have saved the author from a number of errors. The "Fillingham Otuel," for example, which he states "has been lost" (p. 92), was purchased by the British Museum in 1907 and is now Addit. ms. 37492. In his account of the Northern Homily Cycle he speaks on p. 289 of "ms. Br. Mus. Additional 38010 (c. 1450)," and on the following page of "ms. Phillipps 8254 (Northern; 1400-1450)"—evidently unaware that they are the same. Among the fifteenth-century mss. of "Marie, Modur and Mayden, euere wel þe Be" (p. 533) he lists "British Museum C, 11, a. 28 f. 97," which is not a manuscript but a printed book. The reference should be to *page* 97. On pp. 308, 313, and 314 references are given to "Durham Cathedral Libr. 5. 2. 14" and also to "Cosin's Library ms. v. ii 14." These are not two manuscripts but one: it is preserved in the library of Durham *University*. Under the head of "The Primer or Lay-Folks' Prayer-Book" (p. 356) mention is made only of Camb.

ms. Dd. 11.82, which was edited for the EETS. Other manuscripts of the Primer have also been printed, e. g. B. M. Addit 17010 by Maskell (*Mon. Ritualia Eccl. Anglic.*) and St. John's Camb. G. 24 by Littlehales (*The Prymer or Prayer-Book of the Lay People in the Middle Ages*, Lond. 1891-2), with collations of still others. "The Wise Man's Proverbs" (p. 378) occur not only in ms. Bodley 9 but also in ms. Rawl. poet 32, from which this piece has been printed by Zupitza (*Archiv* xc, 243 ff.).

Very surprising is the confusion of Phillipps 8336 with Porkington 10—the former being a manuscript written by William Herebert about 1330 and the latter a miscellaneous manuscript of about 1460. The source of this error is to be found in Patterson's *Mid. Eng. Penit. Lyric*, where three of Herebert's hymns are reprinted with an erroneous reference to Porkington ms. 10. Wells, however, makes matters worse by attempting to harmonize Patterson's mistaken reference with the correct designation of this manuscript as given by Wright (*Rel. Antiq.* II, 225). Thus Herebert's hymns are referred to "Porkington 10, now Phillipps 8336 (c. 1460)" (p. 489; cf. also pp. 502 top, 532, and 853). It will be noted that the date of the Porkington ms. is here transferred to the Phillipps ms. *Per contra*, in speaking of "The Good Wyfe Wold a Pylgremage," which actually is preserved in the Porkington ms., he adds in parenthesis: "Phillipps 8336; c. 1460" (p. 381).

Occasionally texts are entered in the *Manual* as separate pieces which are really portions of poems elsewhere described. Thus "A Definition of Robbery" (p. 439) is merely an extract from William of Nassyngton's *Speculum Vite*; and "The Efficacy of Ave Marias" (p. 169) is a fragmentary text of the poem, "How the Psalter of Oure Lady was Made" (see p. 168). The "Song of Joy on the Coming of Christ" (ms. Laud 622) is inaccurately described as consisting of "172 seven-stress verses in couplets" (p. 503): actually it consists of just half this number of lines. And instead of being a separate piece, it occurs in Ashmol. 43 and Egerton 1993 as the Prologue of the poem on the Birth of Christ (Horstmann, *AELeg.* 1875, pp. 64 ff.), though no cross reference is made to this text. More serious is the confusion created by entering the "Lay Folk's Catechism" (p. 355) and "Don Jon Gaytryge's Sermon" (p. 348) as distinct pieces. For this error the Early Eng. Text Society is originally responsible, though a comparison of the two

texts as there printed would have been sufficient to establish their identity.

Typographical errors, in a book crammed as this one is with bibliographical data, are not surprising. I note only a few which have chanced to come to my attention: P. 348 (8th line from top)—for “Ii. 36” read “Ii. 1. 36”: delete “Ll. I. 8.” P. 438—Instead of “Rawlinson 939” (cited twice) read “Rawl. D. 939.” P. 490—in the third line of the song of Canute for “Roþeþ” read “Roweþ.” On p. 781 (third line from bottom) and p. 787 (sixth line from bottom), for “Perrould” read “Gerould.” P. 789 [14]—for “E St 13. 165” read “E St 14. 165.” P. 819 [35]—the reference for “Seven Questions to be Asked” appears to be wrong. P. 823 [11]—“The ABC of Aristotle” in Harl. 1304 is printed in EETS. *Ex. Ser.* 8. 65. P. 823 [24]—“King Solomon’s Book” will be found in EETS. 69. 81, *not* in 43. 81.

A startling slip, for which the printers can hardly be held responsible, appears in the statement on p. 502 (13th line from bottom): “the poet shows that Christ wrote the charter of His love with the *inkhorn* [italics mine] of His wounds.” What the poet actually said was:

Vor love the chartre wrot,
And the enke orn of his wounde.

The detection of errors in small matters is always the most ungracious part of the reviewer’s function; though in the case of a bibliographical manual one cannot evade a painful concern for the references and notes. Nevertheless, a positive injustice would be done to Professor Wells’s book by a failure to recognize at the same time the great service which he has rendered to Middle English scholarship by opening a path through the wilderness. In proportion as one appreciates the difficulties involved in such an undertaking one will value Professor Wells’s *Manual* as a contribution to Middle English bibliography.

In his Preface the author drops a hint that a second edition of the *Manual* may possibly be undertaken. In view of this possibility one ventures to suggest that the reader’s convenience would be greatly increased if the Bibliographical Notes could be arranged at the foot of the page immediately below the text to which they relate, instead of being massed at the end of the volume. At present much turning of the leaves is required.